

**JUNE 24, 2011**

**FEDERAL SAFE COSMETICS LEGISLATION AIDES SALON WORKER HEALTH**

***Brazilian Blowout and other toxic beauty products could become extinct with new legislation***

WASHINGTON—Today, Reps. Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill., Ed Markey, D-Mass., and Tammy Baldwin, D-Wisc., will introduce the Safe Cosmetics Act of 2011, which gives the Food and Drug Administration authority to ensure that personal care products are free of harmful ingredients. Last month, [10 members of Congress sent a letter to the FDA urging action on highly toxic “Brazilian” hair straightening products](#), and salon workers testified before a Congressional briefing, urging stronger federal regulation of salon products. Now, this legislation comes to the aid of thousands of nail and hair salon workers who are exposed to highly toxic chemicals in their daily workplace.

“The case of Brazilian Blowout makes it clear that the current law regulating the safety of cosmetics and personal care products is broken,” said Erin Switalski, of the National Healthy Nail Salon Alliance. “A large dose of formaldehyde in hair salon products simply shouldn’t be legal and it is. This greatly jeopardizes the health of salon workers.”

“Salon workers should have the right to a safe work place free from chemicals that impact their health and consumers deserve to know that when they go to the salon for beauty services that their health isn’t being compromised,” said Anuja Mendiratta, of the California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative.

On a daily basis and often for long hours, nail and hair salon technicians, most of whom are women of child-bearing age, work with solvents, glues, polishes, dyes, straightening solutions and other products. These salon products contain a multitude of chemicals known or suspected to cause cancer, miscarriage, allergies and respiratory, neurological and reproductive harm.

“As a hair salon professional, what really concerns me is the fact that salon products are not labeled to tell us what we’re being exposed to day in and day out,” said Safiyyah Edley, owner of Luv Mi Kinks salon in California. “The health problems that arise from exposure to toxic chemicals are just unnecessary. There are safer alternatives, but we need regulation in order to really push them forward.”

The Safe Cosmetics Act was first introduced in 2010. This year, congressional sponsors have worked with business allies to revise this year’s version to address the concerns of small businesses. This bill supports the efforts of businesses that are already making safer products. Existing law, passed in 1938, granted decision-making about ingredient safety to the cosmetics industry. Advocates have pointed to the Brazilian Blowout incident as a case study for what can go wrong with current regulations. In that instance, the company sold products labeled “formaldehyde free,” the FDA received numerous complaints of serious injury, and independent lab testing found dangerously high levels of formaldehyde, a known carcinogen, to be endangering worker and consumer health. The U.S. is far behind other countries in their ability to act quickly to remove toxic personal care products. Several countries, including Canada, Ireland and France, have already banned these hair products, but they still remain on the U.S. market.

“The growing number of reports of serious health problems arising from the use of dangerous chemicals in personal care products shows a need to update our laws and protect men, women, and children from harmful exposure,” said **Rep. Schakowsky**. “Currently, manufacturers are not required to disclose all their ingredients on labels and the FDA has no power to supervise the use of toxic chemicals in cosmetics. Americans are left in the dark about harmful mystery ingredients in personal care products; consumers deserve confidence that the products that they use will not hurt them.”

Major provisions of the legislation would:

- Phase out ingredients linked to cancer, birth defects and developmental harm
- Create a health-based safety standard that includes protections for children, the elderly, workers and other vulnerable populations
- Close labeling loopholes by requiring full ingredient disclosure, including the constituent ingredients of fragrance and salon products, on product labels and company Web sites
- Give workers access to information about unsafe chemicals in personal care products
- Require data sharing to avoid duplicative testing and encourage the development of alternatives to animal testing
- Provide adequate funding the FDA Office of Cosmetics and Colors so it has the resources it needs to provide effective oversight of the cosmetics industry
- Level the playing field so small cosmetics manufacturers can compete fairly

“People’s health should not be needlessly put at risk by dangerous chemicals in cosmetics. That is why as Chair of congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), I am supporting the Safe Cosmetics Act, which would give the FDA regulatory authority over cosmetics and personal care products. Congress should move to swiftly adopt this legislation,” said Rep. Judy Chu of California, who hosted the Congressional briefing on salon worker health.

Dr. Quach at the Cancer Prevention Institute of California led and published a study in the American Journal of Public Health, finding air levels of toxic chemicals in nail salons in California exceeding what is recommended for indoor air, including methyl methacrylate, a compound banned by the FDA.

“Our concern is that harmful chemicals at unsafe levels in the workplace may also have impacts on the long-term health of nail salon workers, especially if workers are exposed over a long period of time,” said Dr. Quach.

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*The National Healthy Salon Alliance is working to raise the profile of salon worker health and safety issues, to connect and leverage the resources of concerned groups (including workers’ rights, labor, environmental and reproductive health and justice, and Asian Pacific Islander groups), to advocate that salon product manufactures reformulate and produce safer products, and to advocate for greater regulatory protection of salon workers. The Alliance is a joint project of California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative, National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum and Women’s voices for the Earth.*